

Great Plains Farmers Team With Science



CANVAS DAM — Dennis Carter of Syracuse, Kan., places a canvas dam on an irrigation ditch to route the water to a suitable field. In the background is a dry, high plain. (UPI)

By JOSEPH CARTER
United Press International
 SYRACUSE, Kan. (UPI) — Rugged great plains farmers, teamed with science, reap abundance today from the drylands of America where the ominous threat of "dust bowl" once lurked.

The great drought of the 1930s, where a hot sun and relentless wind sapped the soil of moisture, may never be repeated. The black clouds of dust that strangled life and the economy three decades ago have been doused by ingenuity, research and courage.

Botanists have bred new drought-resistant seeds. Cheap electricity has opened wells for new irrigation. Manufactures have produced new water-saving equipment. Behind it, and most staunch, are the great plains farmers. "The sturdy qualities of great plains citizens," Oklahoma

Gov. Henry Bellmon said, "have kept them on the high plains during times of trial." Bellmon, himself a wheat farmer whose father pioneered the Cherokee strip of Oklahoma, said erratic great plains weather "calls forth the maximum ingenuity of individuals who depend upon the soil for their livelihood."

Drought Hits All
 Across the plains, the loss of a crop not only affects the farmers but it hits merchants, bankers and vibrates throughout the United States' economy. Fighting drought, therefore, is a national problem handled by farmers.

The wind-burned farmers dusted off the depression and drought of the 1930s and vowed the dust bowl never would happen again. Strict conservation measures were employed. Soil tillers started raising cattle.

Land was allowed to lay fallow one year to accumulate moisture for a crop the next season. Irrigation was encouraged. When widespread electricity came in the 1940s, wells were drilled in dry areas.

Water was conserved by new ponds and lakes. Scientific plowing was developed. "Chisel" plows that would turn up lumps of damp soil when dry spells arose were em-

ployed. Furrows were turned to deflect the prevailing winds. Other plows brought stubble to the surface to help hold moisture.

Seeds that would stand the drought were developed. Crop land was diverted to pasture and hay - feed storage was used.

State Rep. Francis Carter, of Syracuse, a veteran Western Kansas farmer, said the change was radical. He compared the attitude reversal with the switch from horses to tractors.

"The drought of the '50s could have been as disastrous as the 1930s," Forest Beal, Nash, Okla. farmer said. "If the necessary adjustments hadn't been made. There have been some remarkable techniques developed since the 1930s," he said. "We have learned to live with the weather."

Bellmon called "the erratic weather of the great plains" an "almost insurmountable handicap" 30 years ago. "Present day methods," the

governor said, "employing better equipment, adapted varieties of plants and tillage methods have softened the feast and famine characteristics formerly accepted as a necessary part of great plains agriculture."

Stabilize Economy
 The general economy of the plains has been stabilized by more emphasis on cattle production. Many farmers who formerly grubbed their living from wheat now raise cattle and feed grain. Fertilizer and careful rotation of crops on wheatland have been a bonanza for wheat raisers.

Marvin E. Tong Jr., director of the Great Plains Historical association at Lawton, Okla., said his organization was "concerned with the general lack of understanding and appreciation of the plains environment."

"The region is characterized by a level landscape, absence of trees and a semi-arid climate. Periodically," Tong said, "the plains is swept with a drought and people who live on the plains must learn to accept this fact of nature and plan accordingly - including farmers, bankers, merchants and all others concerned."

"In order for a man to survive in a plains environment," Tong said, "he must adapt to a way of life that is far different from humid area ideas, institutions and laws."

Cooper's Unexpected Sightings on Earth Confirmed by NASA

By ALVIN B. WEBB Jr.
CAPE CANAVERAL (UPI) — Some experts were flatly convinced U.S. astronaut, L. Gordon Cooper Jr. was suffering from hallucinations.

Others were less incredulous, but preferred to believe that "outside influences" such as atmospheric conditions or perhaps even weightlessness were primarily responsible for it.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration put a five-man scientific team to work on

the problem. After weeks of research, the group came up with its rather startling answer: Astronaut Cooper saw exactly what he said he saw on earth below during his 22.9-orbit voyage around the globe last May 15-16.

Report Vindicated
 Thus, with no ifs, ands or buts, one of the most remarkable scientific reports of the year was vindicated. It could have an important bearing on future manned space flights, and even on the development of "spy-in-the-sky" satellites for policing military build-ups on earth.

All the flurry centered around Cooper's report of spectacular views of earth. At one point, he said, "I could detect individual houses and streets" in the Himalaya mountains, on the plains of Tibet and in the southwestern area of the United States.

Sees Road Clearly
 On another occasion, the astronaut said, "I saw what I took to be a vehicle along a road in the Himalaya area and in the Arizona-West Texas area. I could first see the dust blowing off the road, then could see the road clearly."

And still another: "I saw a steam locomotive by seeing the smoke first, then I noted the object moving along what was apparently a track."
 All of which triggered a hot debate in scientific circles. Experts quickly noted that cars, locomotives, houses and such are only a comparatively few feet wide, that road is scant yards across and that Cooper was claiming he saw them from orbital heights of more than 100 miles.

Some said outright that it was impossible, that Cooper must have suffered hallucinations or some sort of space-glowing variation of the "raptures of the deep." Others said perhaps the atmosphere magnified the objects on earth, or that the astronaut's vision was improved by the effects of weightlessness in orbit.

Confirm Astronaut's Views
 Not a bit of it, said the NASA scientific team headed by Dr. John A. O'Keefe. "From knowledge of the factors which affect visibility under these conditions, there appears to be no reason to suspect that these identifications by Cooper were not generally accurate."

In the first place, it was pointed out, Cooper has exceptional vision. A recent examination measured his eyesight at 20-12 — meaning he could see objects at 20 feet that a person with normal 20-20 vision could not detect beyond about 12 feet.

Secondly, Cooper enjoyed "unusually good weather conditions." His report stood out all the more in the light of a general lack of similar sightings by three previous U.S. orbiting astronauts. But on all three of the earlier flights, cloud cover around earth was heavy.

His view was aided by the rarified atmosphere in the Tibetan plain, which rises 16,000 feet above sea level, and by the low humidity, cloudless weather over the U.S. southwest. He did not see other more massive sights such as Los Angeles or Calcutta — even though he flew right over them — because of obscuring haze or clouds.

As for spotting roads of perhaps less than 50 feet across, the NASA experts pointed out that U.S. Rockets as far back as the Viking series in the early 1950s had made similar sightings from altitudes of up to 150 miles.

American military leaders are reported to have found Cooper's report impressively encouraging. The Air Force is developing a camera-carrying "spy" satellite called Samos to photograph sites on earth from perches in space as lofty as Cooper's.

One more point is certain: such grandiose views right outside the spaceship windows should make flights into orbit interesting experiences for many years to come.

'BIG BROTHERS'
 PLACERVILLE, Calif. (UPI) — The State of California is using a "Big Brother" technique to enforce fire laws. A Division of Forestry airplane with a loudspeaker is warning householders in isolated sections of the Sierra Nevada to be careful with fire materials.

Education Department

Notes Special Classes

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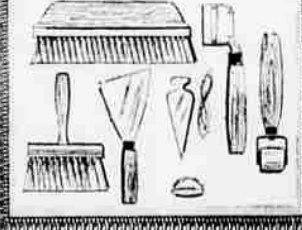
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